

Please accept the written testimony attached

Testimony of Marlene F McGann, MSCJ
Executive Director of South Central CT Substance Abuse Council
Connecticut Prevention Network

**H.B. No. 5044 AN ACT MAKING ADJUSTMENTS TO STATE EXPENDITURES
FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2017**

*Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services – Regional Action Council Funding
February 18, 2016 Appropriations Subcommittee on Health Public Hearing*

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana and Representative Dillion, my name is Marlene F McGann and I am the Executive Director of the South Central CT Substance Abuse Council (SCCSAC), a regional action council serving the nine towns from Meriden to Madison. I strongly oppose the significant cuts to regional action councils that will dismantle the current prevention network structure.

The RACs partner with the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) to assess local needs and assist communities to address substance abuse issues with realistic programs and initiatives that are aimed to reduce the impact of drugs abuse and provide resources for those persons who are already in need of treatment. The RACs are chartered by CT State statute and work with local and statewide partners as part of a unique prevention framework that is cited as a model by federal departments.

Connecticut is faced with an overwhelming number of young people addicted to prescription drugs and heroin. The opiate overdose deaths in our state have reached unprecedented levels and a multi-faceted approach is needed that reaches from the State government to the individuals in each community.

The RACs continue to work directly with DMHAS and our local communities to provide education on opiates, Naloxone, and treatment options. Importantly the RACs have been able to move quickly to address local needs including medication drop boxes, opiate discussion forums and trainings for emergency responders.

In this region of the state, SCCSAC has been addressing opiate issues since collaborating with a Brown University study in 2011 that pinpointed prescription drug abuse in central CT. In 2015 alone SCCSAC provided education on opiates to 500 people as well as mental health and suicide awareness to more than 1000 persons. SCCSAC has also worked directly with faith communities throughout the state to educate congregations on substance abuse, problem gambling, changes in marijuana use and laws, mental health awareness and suicide prevention.

With tightened budgets, school systems and direct service providers have turned to the RACs to provide trainings for staff members on emerging issues and to act as a neutral convener promoting collaborative efforts in the region.

The CT Prevention Network of Regional Action Councils urges the Legislature to reject the severe budget cuts to RACs that would remove the services to local communities at this critical time.

Marlene F. McGann, MSCJ
Executive Director

South Central **CT** Substance Abuse Council (formerly MAWSAC) - serving the communities of Branford, East Haven, Guilford, Hamden, North Branford, North Haven, Madison, Meriden, Wallingford
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"Health is not an individual achievement, but a community responsibility"